

## Public Hearing and CPC Meeting – February 23, 2016

7:00 pm

Kingsbury Room – Police Station

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The Wellesley Community Preservation Committee met at 7:00 pm in the Kingsbury Room of the Police Station.

Present were the following CPC members: Barbara McMahon (Chair), Allan Port (Vice Chair), Susan Hurwitz, Joan Gaughan, Catherine Johnson, Steve Burt, Kathy Egan and Tad Heuer. CPC Assistant Nicole Ng was also present.

Also present were Mason Smith from Advisory, Jack Morgan from the Board of Selectmen (BoS), Executive Director of General Government Services Hans Larsen and Town Counsel Tom Harrington.

CPC Chair called the public hearing to order at 7:05 pm.

### **Community Preservation Committee Public Hearing**

No citizen was present and the public hearing closed at 7:06pm.

### **Discussion of Amending CPA Surcharge and other CPA-related topics Stuart Saginor, Director, Community Preservation Coalition**

Mr. Saginor shared a presentation about CPA communities in the state as well as the implications of amending the CPA surcharge.

#### CPA Statewide

Currently, there are 160 communities that have adopted the CPA surcharge. The number is growing, with the possibility of the City of Boston, the largest community, to join in the fall of 2016. The increase in communities is great for the advocacy of conservation and preservation, but is challenging for the CPA trust fund.

The CPA trust fund is made up of fees collected at the Registries of Deeds when someone purchases a property plus the amount allotted from the state budget surplus. The Coalition is lobbying for the increase of the deed fee from \$10 to \$20 but is meeting resistance. In the meantime, the amount from the state has decreased steadily over the years from \$25m to \$10m. At the same time, CPA communities have gone up but funds have come down, reducing the match to each community from previous years.

#### CPA in Wellesley

Currently, Wellesley gets its CPA revenue from a 1% surcharge on property taxes. If the town would like to increase that revenue, there are a few options, each with its pros and cons.

#### *Direct surcharge increase*

Town could ask citizens to vote an increase in the surcharge. The maximum would be 3%.

Pros: Definite increase in revenue, not subject to state budget which could decrease and even disappear over time.

Cons: Citizens might not agree to a tax hike and could open up protests and discussion to vote away even the current 1%.

Mr. Saginor cautioned that increasing the surcharge just to gain a bigger match would not benefit Wellesley. As a more affluent town, it would only get the first round match and not qualify for the following rounds, making the increase in the match negligible.

Mr. Morgan suggested that voters might agree to a surcharge increase if the town has a compelling project that can only be accomplished with a surcharge increase.

Mr. Saginor suggested that other towns have had success voting in an increase from 1 to 1.5 percent. Voters may support it because it is a small increase but it can have significant impact in increased revenue.

#### *Blended funds*

The "blended" option would increase CPA revenue by combining surcharge and linkage funds, such as donations. Theoretically, the greater revenue would generate a greater state match. But the match is not definite and can change year to year and may even disappear. Also, the town would need to run a campaign to educate citizens about the amendment. It requires a Town Meeting vote and a ballot question. All revenue will be subject to TM appropriations. Timing can also be tricky because blended money is pre-decided before it comes before the CPC.

Counsel Harrington shared how it is working in Littleton where Town and CPC agree on categories or projects beforehand but CPC holds final decision to accept gift or not. Mr. Saginor clarified that although projects coming before CPC already restricted is not illegal, it does not uphold the original intent of the CPA.

Again, he suggested that a 1.5% increase would be a more direct and less complicated source of funds and perhaps Wellesley should try this before the blended option.

Mr. Heuer noted that even if the match were lower, such as 18%, it would still be helpful and significant for some of the historical needs around town.

Mr. Saginor advised against proposing any changes, blended or straight increase, in a year with overrides up for vote.

Discussion then moved to conservation restrictions (CR) and debt service, in light of the recent North 40 purchase. State is asking for proof of CRs and towns should have something to show within 3 years.

**Next Steps:**

Further discussion is needed on this complex subject. Mr. Saginor will send Mr. Port the DOR debt service recommendation. Mr. Port will forward to Mr. Larsen.

**Invoice Approval**

Mr. Heuer moved to approve the invoice of \$4,300 for dues to the Community Preservation Coalition. Mr. Burt seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**November 19, 2015, December 9, 2015, January 13, 2016**

Mr. Port moved to approve the minutes from November 19, 2015, December 9, 2015, and January 13, 2016. Mr. Heuer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

**Project Updates**

- Ms. McMahon reminded everyone to fill out the short online survey for Kelly Field. Public hearing for the project will be held this coming Thursday night.
- Ms. McMahon related that Ms. Fahey, Curator of the Historical Society, questioned whether they have to raise the full amount of their portion by 7/1 before they can receive CPA match. Members decided that was not necessary. Mr. Heuer moved to grant the Historical Society for the archival project \$10,200 by 7/1/2016 with a check in of the fundraising by 1/6/2017 with the assumption to match. Ms. Gaughan seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

**Next Meeting**

Wednesday, March 9, 7:30pm, police station

**Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:35pm by Ms. Hurwitz. It was seconded by Mr. Burt. The vote to adjourn was unanimous.